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ABSTRACT

Out of the eight decades of thought about the meaning of social studies, some agreement as to the purpose and goals of social studies has emerged, yet argument continues on just how the goals and purposes should be applied. One approach to understanding the different points of view on the purposes and goals is the "three traditions" interpretation. That interpretation has been translated into a 45-item Barth/Shermis Social Studies Preference Scale (B/SSSPS). The three traditions approach hypothesizes that social studies historically has followed three traditional interpretations: Social Studies taught as Citizenship Transmission, as Social Science, and as Reflective Inquiry. Ninety-six social studies teachers-in-training in the Faculty of Education at Mansoura University, when asked to identify the interpretation which best fit their views, were essentially unable to discriminate between interpretations. One reason for this is that social studies as a field in Egypt has not developed a meaning which can be clearly translated to the teachers. A remaining task in the development of a social studies program is to make explicit--in Egyptian terms--the meaning of social studies, so that teachers can select purposes, method and content which are consistent with Egyptian goals. As Egyptian social studies teachers come to recognize the differences between interpretations of social studies they will begin to exercise their judgement by selecting a consistent set of behaviors that reflect an integrated approach to the teaching of social studies. (AG)

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# EGYPTIAN SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO THE BARTH/SHERMIS SOCIAL STUDIES PREFERENCE SCALE

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# EGYPTIAN SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO THE BARTH/SHERMIS SOCIAL STUDIES PREFERENCE SCALE

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In recent years social studies educators who teach methods courses have become interested in the question, How do preservice and professional social studies teachers perceive social studies? In other words, what do teachers think social studies is? Social studies educators know that a teacher's perception of social studies governs how the subject will be taught. One instrument used for the past ten years to determine a teacher's perception of social studies has been the Barth/Shermis Social Studies Preference Scale (B/SSSPS). Teachers responding to the forty-five Likert item Preference Scale do reveal a profile of their beliefs about social studies.

In particular, methods teachers have used the Scale to help teachers-in-training identify not only their beliefs but also to identify inconsistencies as well as strengths and weaknesses of their understanding of social studies. The author in the spring of 1982 administered the B/SSSPS to ninety-six Faculty of Education, Mansoura University, social studies teachers. The response of these teachers revealed rather consistent almost predictable patterns, but before we examine those patterns, we turn first to a brief examination of the context in which social studies as a subject field has evolved and the competing different interpretations of the meaning of social studies.

## Social Studies: Definition and Meaning

Social studies as a curriculum area began to take form in various parts of the world shortly after the turn of the century. Many other fields such as political science, sociology, anthropology, and psychology have, along with social studies, developed since 1900 an area of content

and a set of questions which are particular to their disciplines. The social studies, however, differs from the other fields because the emphasis in social studies is on "integration of social sciences and humanities for the purpose of instruction in citizenship education," (Barr, Barth & Shermis, 1978, p. 18), whereas the other developing fields concentrate on academic separation and specialization of content. In a sense the field of social studies has from its very beginning challenged the modern trend toward fragmentation and specialization of knowledge. In part, because of social studies emphasis on integration, the academic community as well as the general public have had difficulty defining the role of a social studies curriculum.

Some of those who originally conceived social studies believed that each subject in the social studies curriculum, K-12, should attempt to integrate the fragmented and specialized knowledge which students had learned about the society in which they lived. The feeling among the founders of the social studies movement was that citizens could not participate effectively in a democracy without some attempt on the part of the educational system to help integrate that fragmented knowledge. What educators lamented was a school system which from Kindergarten through secondary school emphasized a specialization of knowledge. The traditional teaching of history is an illustration of a specialization subject which was separated from geography and geography from government such that the study of oneself, the community, the state, the nation, and the world were compartmentalized into isolated bits of information that, when left unintegrated, might remain essentially irrelevant to citizens. Most democratic societies expect citizens to participate in decisions about contemporary problems and yet, according to the founding social

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studies educators, public schools were not organized to teach the skills of citizenship that require processing of knowledge, valuing, and participating.

If one of the goals of social studies is citizenship education, then some educators reason, the definition of social studies should be: "The social studies is an integration of experience and knowledge concerning human relations for the purpose of citizenship education." (Barr, Barth & Shermis, 1977, p. 69). There may be some agreement among educators that the field should be essentially general education for citizenship and that the proper content is the experience of man integrated and taught in such a way that students learn the skill of decision-making. Disagreement, however, about the meaning of citizenship, integration and what are appropriate experiences remains. One hypothesis about the different meanings as to what social studies is, has become popularly called the "Three Traditions." In brief, the Three Traditions approach hypothesizes that social studies historically has followed at least three traditional interpretations: (1) Social Studies taught as Citizenship Transmission (CT), (2) Social Studies taught as Social Science (SS). and (3) Social Studies taught as Reflective Inquiry (RI).

"The oldest tradition--indoctrination of the young in what is taken to be the basic values of society. . . [is] called Citizenship Transmission" (Barth & Shermis, 1980, p. 9). The second tradition called Social Science interprets social studies to mean social science. This tradition proposes rigorous training in concepts, theories and knowledge gathering techniques of a particular social science discipline. Reflective Inquiry, the third tradition, is based on the philosophy of John Dewey. The emphasis for this tradition is upon the inquiry process. Citizenship and integration

are both practiced when students learn how to be decision-makers through the reconstruction of their own experiences.

In brief, social studies educators are in general agreement on definition. In consequence, methods teachers have difficulty explaining the meaning of social studies to teachers-in-training. Often those teachers-in-training are not sure what they believe about the meaning of social studies, and therefore are unsure how to approach the subject. However, as stated earlier, responses on the B/SSSPS can help identify the social studies intellectual tradition to which teachers belong by profiling their attitudes about the meaning of social studies. Method teachers using these profiles can help their students identify what social studies means to them. Social studies as a citizenship education curriculum has found wide acceptance in many countries throughout the world. Egypt has within recent years adopted a social studies curriculum for its schools and begun to develop a teacher training program to train social studies teachers. It was to a selected group of these Egyptian social studies teachers-in-training that the B/SSSPS was administered.

Analysis of the Responses

The Barth/Shermis Social Studies Preference Scale consists of forty-five Likert type items with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Fifteen items are associated with each tradition. Each of the three traditions are assessed as to Purpose, Method and Content by five items each. Clarifying one's position toward the different social studies traditions is faciliated by a matrix in which scores can be tabulated and interpreted quickly. Cells appearing in each row of the matrix are labeled Purpose, Method, and Content, while the Citizenship Transmission, Social Science and Reflective Inquiry traditions are represented

by each column. Individuals can judge their overall position toward social studies by summing the scores for the items in each column. Table 1 shows that 52% of the teachers could be classified into one of the traditions. Of those that could be classified the strongest preference, 27%, was for the combined traditions of both Social Science and Reflective Inquiry. The second most popular choice was the Reflective Inquiry tradition with 9%. Of the fifty-four teachers that could be classified, 75% chose either Reflective Inquiry or Social Science or a combined Social Science and Reflective Inquiry. One could say, then, that when a tradition is chosen, about three-fourths of the time teachers have a preference for a tradition other than Citizenship Transmission.

One other important observation about Table 1 was that 48% of the teachers could not be classified. Unclassified responses were those responses which agreed with all three traditions, which meant they did not discriminate between the traditions. Of the total unclassified responses 26% strongly agreed with all three traditions and 22% slightly agreed with all three traditions. In other words, almost half the teachers did not actually choose between the three traditions, but rather, even though the traditions are contradictory, accepted them all.

Looking at the Purpose category in Table 2 one finds that the percentage of strongly agree increase as they move from CT to SS to RI, 21% to 32% to 55% respectively. In the slightly agree percentages the teachers seem to favor CT with 66% and SS with 60%. There is very little disagreement with any of the three categories, 13% disagreement with CT being the highest.

In the Method category the teachers do not vary greatly in strongly agreeing with all three traditions, showing a just slightly higher percentage

for Ct and RI, 54% and 66% respectively. In slightly agree they just slightly favor SS with 47%. Disagreement was low, 8% slightly disagreed with CT and SS and only 1% with RI.

In the Content category the highest strongly agree percentage went to SS with 71%. In slightly agree the teachers reversed and chose CT with 61% and RI with 30%. Perhaps the most startling revelation is that while there was mild disagreement with the CT and RI traditions, there was absolutely no disagreement with the SS tradition.

It should also be noted in Table 2 that there was no strong disagreement in any category. Each of the ninety-six teachers responded to the forty-five items on the B/SSSPS making a total of 4,320 single responses. Of that total there were only 50 slightly disagree responses and no strongly disagree responses. This means that 98.8% of the responses were positive with only 1.2% in any way disagreeing with any of the forty-five items. Again, as reflected in Table 1, the teachers responses suggest that even though the traditions are contradictory, they did not discriminate between those traditions.

Interpretation

What do the teachers' responses tell us about their perception of social studies? Almost half the teachers could not be classified because they were unable to discriminate between traditions. This is not unusual, for past research studies showed similar results when the B/SSSPS was administered to college students and teachers in countries where social studies was a relatively new field. (Barth & Norris, 1976).

Where social studies is a new field and still being defined in terms of how the curriculum should be formed in the schools, it is common to find

teachers accepting all traditions. Noting this fact, some college professors suggest that it might be useful for teachers-in-training to be open and unclassified as to their traditions, that is to be eclectic even though the beliefs are, in fact, contradictory. It is much like asking one if he agrees with everything and receiving the answer "Yes," which is comparable to the 98.8% of Egyptian teachers who agreed with all items. Though at first thought that answer might be useful when a country is developing goals and purposes, in fact, such an answer reflects considerable confusion about the meaning (goals and purposes) of social studies.

It is difficult to understand how one could strongly agree at the same time with both Reflective Inquiry and Citizenship Transmission with the former based on critical thinking and the latter on indoctrination. How could one agree with processing knowledge as the ultimate goal and yet accept equally a strong belief in an uncritical acceptance of values? How could one believe in the needs and interests of students as the source of appropriate content and yet, strongly agree to the contradictory notion that a subject area authority should choose the content to be studied? In short, believing that learning consists of memorizing the content identified by some authority, and yet equally accepting that learning can be achieved through interaction between students, is inconsistent. The contraditions between the three traditions are sufficiently great that a strong belief in one should logically elicit at least some disagreement with the other two traditions. In particular, inconsistent responses were found between Purpose where 55% strongly agreed with RI and Content where 61% favored CT and 71% favored SS. Also 27% identified a strong belief in a combined Social Science and Relective Inquiry position which is about like grafting two completely different sets of conflicting

ideas together. Teachers ask, Is it not possible to teach using all three traditions? The answer to this is clear. No, it is not possible to remain consistent and to teach using all three traditions at the same time for they are much too contradictory and in conflict with each other. However, if the question were asked, Could the three traditions be used separately during a school year, so that in one unit the RI tradition would be emphasized, in another the SS tradition emphasized, and in a third, CT, then the answer is yes. One cannot hope for a consistent approach to social studies if the purpose for teaching the course is of one tradition, the method of another tradition, and the content of a third. One cannot develop a relevant, consistent and logical curriculum on a confused meaning of social studies, for if such a curriculum were designed teachers and students would soon know that its purposes, method and content made no sense.

## Conclusion

The social studies curriculum movement has evolved along with its companions social science and humanities over the past eighty years. Out of the eight decades of thought about the meaning of social studies, some agreement as to the purposes and goals of social studies has emerged, yet argument continues on just how the goals and purposes should be applied. One approach to understanding the different points of view on the purposes and goals is the Three Traditions interpretation. That interpretation has been translated into the forty-five item B/SSSPS. Ninety-six social studies teachers-in-training in the Faculty of Education at Mansoura University, when asked to identify the interpretation which best fits their point of view, were essentially unable to discriminate between interpretations. One reason for this is undoubtedly that social studies as a field in Egypt has not developed a meaning which can be clearly

translated to the teachers. Perhaps, a remaining task in the development of a social studies program is to make explicit in Egyptian terms the meaning of social studies, so that teachers in the field can select purposes, method and content which are consistent with Egyptian goals. If teachers are to be professional, they must be expected eventually to make choices between alternative and conflicting beliefs. As Egyptian social studies teachers come to recognize the differences between interpretations of social studies they will begin to exercise their judgment by selecting a consistent set of behaviors that reflect an integrated approach to the teaching of social studies. The Egyptian experience with developing a meaning for social studies, as is also true in other developing nations, should not be lost on American social studies educators who continue to struggle with the same problem of meaning.

TABLE 1

Distribution of teachers' positions toward social studies based upon data from the Faculty of Education, Mansoura University, 1982.

| SOCIAL STUDIES TRADITIONS | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Citizenship Transmission | 2 | 2% |
| Citizenship Transmission & Social Science | 7 | 7% |
| Social Science | 3 | 3% |
| Social Science & Reflective Inquiry | 25 | 27% |
| Reflective Inquiry | 9 | 9% |
| Reflective Inquiry & Citizenship Tranmission | 4 | 4% |
| Unclassified | 46 | 48% |
| TOTALS | 96 | 100% |

TABLE 2

Distribution of scores by cell for the Barth/Shermis Social Studies Preference Scale based upon data from teachers, Faculty of Education, Mansoura University, 1982.

| | | THREE TRADITIONS | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Citizenship Transmission | | Social Science | | Reflective Inquiry | |
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| PURPOSE | SA | 20 | 21% | 33 | 32% | 51 | 55% |
| | A | 64 | 66% | 58 | 60% | 38 | 41% |
| | D | 12 | 13% | 7 | 8% | 3 | 4% |
| | SD | | | | | | |
| METHOD | SA | 52 | 54% | 44 | 45% | 63 | 66% |
| | A | 37 | 38% | 45 | 47% | 32 | 33% |
| | D | 7 | 8% | 7 | 8% | 1 | 1% |
| | SD | | | | | | |
| CONTENT | SA | 29 | 30% | 68 | 71% | 43 | 45% |
| | A | 59 | 61% | 28 | 29% | 48 | 50% |
| | D | 8 | 9% | | | 5 | 5% |
| | SD | | | | | | |

SA = Strongly Agree  A = Slightly Agree
D = Slightly Disagree  SD = Strongly Disagree

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